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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Iran GWOT - Moussaoui Trial -  
Guantanamo

PARIS - Tuesday, March 07, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Iran  
GWOT - Moussaoui Trial - Guantanamo

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Without exception all front pages and a good share of today's editorials are devoted to the day of protest against PM Villepin's employment contract plan for youth (CPE). While Le Figaro acknowledges that the government is expecting strong pressures to be coming from today's demonstrations, the economic press warns that businesses and human resource executives are lukewarm about the Villepin plan. The left-leaning press is critical, with Liberation headlining "The Kleenex Generation" and communist l'Humanite saying: "We Do Not Want the CPE, But We Have (Other) Ideas."

Iran is a major international story: "Washington Qualifies Iran's Nuclear Program as a 'Global Threat'" is Le Monde's headline, which quotes John Bolton: "If Iran pursues its program, it will be exposing itself to concrete and painful consequences." Iran's reform movement President, Maryam Rajavi comments also in Le Monde: "The last 18 years of concealment and three years of negotiations since the Iranian nuclear program was set in motion have put the world and the Iranian nation in danger. The Mullahs have pushed the entire region to the edge of an abyss." In Le Figaro editorialist Luc de Barochez pens an op-ed entitled "Iran's Nuclear Program: Why We Need to Be Pessimistic." (See Part C)

The Moussaoui trial makes the front page of Le Monde, "Between the Death Penalty and Life in Prison" and elicits a number of reports (See Part C) including in Liberation which devotes a full-page report to the 317 interrogations of Guantanamo prisoners made public by the Pentagon: "Four years after the detention camp opened, the Pentagon was forced by the U.S. press to publish the reports of some 317 detainee interrogations. but far short of the 760 suspects who have spent time in Guantanamo." Liberation quotes extensively from the prisoners' testimony, characterizes the detentions as "abusive" as it points to "weak proof" and generally calls the system "Kafkaesque." La Croix carries an op-ed entitled "Torture, the Poison of Democracies." (See Part C)

Le Monde's wrap-up report of President Bush's trip to India, Afghanistan and Pakistan concludes: "President Bush's first trip to South Asia underscores the transformation of American diplomacy in the region over the last few years. India, America's 'natural ally' has been promoted to the rank of strategic partner. Pakistan, and especially its president. will have to make do with a good grade for its commitment to the war on terror and Bush's guarded support for the country's democratization. Far from reinforcing Musharraf's position, which is already isolated on the international scene, Mr. Bush's visit has further weakened him."

Le Figaro announces on its front page: "France's New Doctrine to Fight Terrorism." France's White Book on terrorism will be approved today by the Prime Minister and seven of his ministers, setting the scene for the new threat level to France and the improvements required to fight terrorism. Le Figaro notes that one of the measures includes informing the public, including through the recently implemented database on terrorist acts perpetrated in France. Another area of investigation is education, Islamism and proselytism in schools.

Popular right-of-center Le Parisien interviews Bernard-Henri Levy, the author of a book on America entitled "American Vertigo." "It's never right to hate a country and even less its people. You can hate a government; you can fight George Bush, and that's my case. But, when you hate America in and of itself, the worse is never far away: notably the hatred of democracy. The dominate impression is that. democracy is alive and well. Despite this pitiable administration, the

citizenship model is functioning. The manner in which they manage immigration, their ethnic minorities, the way they are able to overcome their factionalism and to build a model of national integration is something wonderful. I would like Clichy. St Denis. to take inspiration from this and to feel fully patriotic, proud of their flag, of their Constitution, without denying their Arab origins."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Iran

"Iran's Nuclear Program: Why We Need to Be Pessimistic"  
Luc de Barochez in right-of-center Le Figaro (03/07): "Nothing and no one has been able to convince Iran to stop a nuclear program which clearly has military implications. Experts are convinced that Iran can develop the bomb within three to ten years. But how can the U.S., France and Great Britain stop Iran? Tehran is in a position of strength. Any crisis that might involve Iran turns immediately into an oil crisis. The Iranians know it and take advantage of it. In addition, regional crises have played into their hands: their major enemies, the Taliban and Saddam Hussein have been eliminated by the Americans! The EU-3 attempts to resolve the crisis through diplomacy were all the more courageous because the U.S. was not part of the effort. When traditional diplomacy fails, there are the sanctions. But the consequences of such measures have yet to be addressed: the impact of an oil crisis on the international community and the yet-to-be built consensus with China and Russia in order to make the sanctions stick. Secretary Rice's recent visit to the Gulf region showed that the Arab monarchies themselves have a hard time understanding why there is a problem with an Iranian bomb and no problem with an Israeli bomb. A military intervention in Iran carries enormous risks. In the end, the international community has nothing but poor choices to choose from. The next two years will be crucial: waiting for the U.S. presidential election and a hypothetical revision of America's foreign policy means wasting precious time."

GWOT - Moussaoui Trial - Guantanamo

"Moussaoui and the American Judge"  
Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (03/07): "Judge Leonie Brinkema is in the last stretch of what will probably be one of the most delicate affairs of her career. The case of Moussaoui, the only individual standing trial for 9/11, is eliciting wide political and media interest. The legal tug-of-war pitting her against Moussaoui is of a special nature in view of Moussaoui's outbursts about Islamism and his incoherent strategy of defense. But despite the ambient tension, Judge Brinkema has never lost sight of the need for a fair trial. She has tried her best to put together an impartial jury. Because the death penalty is at stake, she prefers having a jury made up of people who have their doubts about capital punishment. Even if Virginia is a state that favors the death penalty, Brinkema's court has never called for this verdict."

"Torture, the Poison of Democracies"  
Pierre Servent in Catholic La Croix (03/07): "If we want to understand why a great and friendly democracy like the U.S. gave into practices such as those depicted in the Abu Ghraib photos, if we want to go beyond comfortable moral posturing, we must touch upon those phenomena which lead democracies to make a pact with the devil in the name of their fight for 'good.' 9/11 and the movement of solidarity that followed around the world, as well as the feeling in America of no longer being invulnerable led to the temptation of accepting all in the name of punishment for the guilty. This psychological pitfall is dangerous because it tends to demonize the other, whether he is truly guilty or simply embodies one's fantasy of the guilty. Hence the debate in the U.S. press about the use of torture since 9/11. The brutality of the initial trauma explains how practically an entire nation - the elites and the media - jumped on the bandwagon of the war against Iraq, a country which in fact had nothing whatsoever to do with 9/11. From then on this rhetoric began to have a life of its own, mistreating democratic values in the name of effectiveness. and leading to exceptional laws like the Patriot Act. While the point is not to adopt a stance of angelism towards Al-Qaeda, which knows how to use our values as leverage against ourselves, we must be extremely rigorous when it comes to our principles: when we ignore them we give fuel to the terrorists. This is when poison starts to drip through the veins of democracies. When virtuous regimes give in to torture, they suffer a double defeat, ethical and military." STAPLETON